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INFO AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RHMFISS/CDR USTRANSCOM SCOTT AFB IL  
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000707

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: NDN Shipments Moving Under Uzbekistan Agreement

REF: USDAO TASHKENT IIR 6 939 0074 09

CLASSIFIED BY: Nicholas Berliner, Pol-Econ Chief; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) The Uzbek Ministry of Defense issued approvals on May 6 for the first rail shipments on the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) following the signing of the Exchange of Letters on April 3. Approval for seven shipments came (just) within the 30-day window foreseen by the agreement. The first NDN train is scheduled to arrive in Hairaton, Afghanistan on May 17.

12. (C) Issuance of transit approvals for these initial shipments was lengthy, reflecting the fact that the Uzbek bureaucracy (not itself known as a model of efficiency under any circumstances) had to develop a system to handle them. Under the structure the GOU has established, the Ministry of Defense (MOD) plays a coordinating role, seeking clearance from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Interior, as well as the National Security Service, Customs Service, Border Guards and Uzbekistan Railways. In the case of air freight, the Civil Aviation Authority must also issue its concurrence. Once all interested ministries have given their approval, the MOD informs Uzbekistan Railways (or Uzbekistan Airways and Korean Airlines, in the case of air cargo), which then sends a telegram to all railroad authorities along the route authorizing release of the train. Another complicating factor for the Uzbeks is congestion at Hairaton and the ripple effects a back up there would cause along the length of the line, which still must handle its pre-NDN commercial cargo and passenger volumes.

13. (C) Comment: We are confident that once NDN becomes routinized, the process of issuing authorizations will function smoothly, particularly when requests are submitted beyond the 30-day period stipulated in the Exchange of Letters. The GOU made a political decision at the highest level to support NDN. To the extent that we follow through with local purchase in Uzbekistan and efforts to upgrade capacity at Hairaton, our efforts can undergird this support. The net effect of increased transit of goods through this region in support of our military could also be a significant upgrading of infrastructure and commercial activity that would contribute to regional economic growth and integration among Afghanistan and the states of Central Asia.

NORLAND